

A 1782
L E T T E R

TO the REVEREND

Mr. P E E R S,
Vicar of *Faringdon*, BERKS:

Occasion'd by his CHARACTER of an
Honest DISSENTER,
In Twelve MARKS.

By a CLERGY-MAN.

Dicenda Tacendaque calles? Pers.

L O N D O N:

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Reverend SIR,



THOUGH I should have been well enough pleas'd with your Character of an honest Dissenter in Manuscript, yet if you had taken me into your Counsels, I should never have advis'd the publishing of it : As there is a shew of Argument in it, I might perhaps have thought it proper to be dispers'd among Friends ; our young Divines, and indeed most of the zealous Men among us, want all kind of Helps to enable 'em to engage the Sectaries in ordinary Conversation ; and therefore your Papers, if you had kept 'em for your own Use, to refresh your Memory upon Occasion, or had communicated

'em to your Neighbours upon Exigence, might have done our Cause Service, which I fear Printing never will.

You know, as well as I can tell you, That whoever publishes makes his Appeal to the World for the Justice of the Cause he engages in; and, renouncing all other Advantages, depends upon the Force of his Argument, which he submits to the publick Censure. So, that to speak my Mind freely, I think we of the establish'd Church, have in great measure betray'd our Cause by engaging our Adversaries in open Controversy; since in most of the Disputes between us, the Authority of the Church, which is our mighty Support, is laid aside. Why should we perplex ourselves and our Readers with Questions of the Lawfulness, or Expediency of Ceremonies, or the Nature of Schism, when the Church hath already asserted her own Right to impose, and has actually impos'd the Things we contend for under Pain of Excommunication on those that will not receive 'em? This I speak by the bye,
to

to shew the Indiscretion of this way of Writing in general ; but for your own particular, you must give me leave to deal a little more freely with you.

OUR Adversaries triumph exceedingly over your Performance ; “ In which, “ *they say*, you have discover’d more of “ your own Weakness, than of theirs : ” Nay, some of ’em have pretended to me, That they can read it with as much Satisfaction as you wrote it ; in which, I dare say, they do you wrong ; tho’ indeed, I am afraid it gave them no great Uneasiness.

’T WAS prudently done to bespeak their good Opinion in the Title-page, *The Character of an honest Dissenter* : Implying, I presume, that there are some honest Men among ’em ; But then you should not have taken off the MASK so early as you do in the *Preface*, where you declare, * *That you never met with One* * Pref. 1st Edit. *to whom the Character does belong* ; or that † *it is very difficult to find One* ; especially, † Pref. 2^d Edit. *when you were drawing his Picture* ; Is *this to discover what one Man is, intimating* Pref. to

to others what they should, or should not be?
 which is the Pretence of your Book? Or
 rather, Is it not to draw a Character
 which never was, or probably will be,
 shewn in Life? Your Zeal here, Bro-
 ther, is without Prudence, if not with-
 out Knowledge. For tho' it was dis-
 creet enough not to publish any Thing
 so harsh and severe against the Dissen-
 ters, till you had got handsomely from
 some of 'em towards building your Vi-
 caridge-House; yet still you may, on
 some other Occasion, want their As-
 sistance. They have been generally ve-
 ry civil and liberal to us of the Cler-
 gy, in not only paying us beyond our
 Due, but helping us upon such extra-
 ordinary Occasions as yours. But in-
 deed, I am afraid we shall all fare the
 worse for your Treatment of 'em; and
 that they will be tempted to think, the
 doing us a Favour is the surest way to
 procure our ill Treatment. This, give
 me leave to say, is too great an Injury
 to the Church to be recompenc'd by the
 cold, lifeless Exhortation you give 'em
 in

in another Part of your Book, to pay their Tythes. I wonder how you, who seem to be so very careful of your Interest there, should oversee it so grossly here. And I am the more surpriz'd at this Declaration of yours, because I am inform'd you have some Dissenters in your Neighbourhood, who deserve better Treatment; especially from One, who I am inform'd, has receiv'd Favours from 'em, and has profess'd an Esteem of 'em. Is it, then, Gentleman, or Christian Dealing, thus to condemn a whole Body of Men? If you do indeed condemn 'em, because upon second Thoughts I begin to doubt whether you do or no: You say indeed, *They do not exactly come up to your several Characters of an honest Dissenter.* And as you have order'd it, 'tis no matter if they do not; because if they did, I question whether even you would think 'em honest Men.

You would have every Man, you say, *of what Persuasion soever, conscientiously discharge his Duty; for what is the Motive of your Writing, should be the Rule of other Mens*

Mens Lives, viz. To act according to the best of what they are or can be inform'd of.

THIS, I take it, is your Character of an honest Man, or in your own Words, of One that conscientiously discharges his Duty; you pursue the same Character in the second and third Marks, ^{2d and 3d} which consists, ^{Marks.} in examining the Grounds of the Separation soberly, carefully, and impartially, in setting one's self as free as possible, from all Prejudices and prepossessions on either Side, resolving to be determin'd by Reason, to follow Conviction, and to embrace Truth, on which Side soever it appears to be; ^{Page. 13.} and conclude, that 'tis a Maxim which Reason, Religion, and Christianity in particular inforces, That a Man's Opinion and Practice must be directed by the best Knowledge he has or can have of the Things about which they are concern'd. And in another Place, That the honest Man endeavours to square his Actions according to the best Information he has, or can have from Reason or Revelation. Here you give up the Controversy between the Church and the Dissenters, by making them the Judges

Judges for themselves against us : For, none can judge, who squares his Actions according to the best Information, but God and ourselves : This is, indeed, the Doctrine which other *Protestants* advance, making Sincerity the only Mark of Honesty, and the only Ground of Acceptance with God ; and it is what we have made good Use of against the *Papists*, when they urge the necessity of an infallible Judge, as well as an infallible Rule : Indeed, we have no other, and so are forced to make use of this. But you, Brother, are the First that ever unadvisedly made use of it against the Dissenters, whereby you have entirely releas'd them from our Authority, and set them on a Level with us.

NAY, indeed, I wish you have not by this means set them on the higher Ground ; since they can glory in their Sufferings all along, and from which they pretend, they are not at present free, as the highest Marks of their Sincerity ; which you know we can't brag of, It having been our distinguishing Character,

B

racter,

rafter to comply with whatever our Superiors have enjoyn'd in Church, and State : No doubt we have done this from principles of Obedience, and in order to preserve our Usefulness : But they will be apt to say, it was to keep those Preferments which they flung up in 1662 : But then, on the Foot you have unhappily put the Controversy here, we cannot give such proofs of Sincerity as they : But, indeed, the Evidence will be on their side, and the *Suspicion* on ours.

BUT let us see whether, as you have put it, the Dissenter can be an honest Man : It will be very hard if you have put him under an Impossibility of being so.

Mark IV. Now, the honest Dissenter, you say, communicates his Scruples to his parochial
 pag. 17. Minister, and does not determine himself without the Knowledge, Advice, and APPROBATION of him, whom he looks upon as the Guide, and DIRECTOR of his Soul, and its Concerns, and the proper Judge of the
 pag. 18. Causes of his Separation ; for whilst a Man continues in the Church, or, indeed, whilst he
 continues

continues a Member of any Congregation he submits himself and his Conscience to the Direction of the Pastor of the Congregation. Now, unless these Things can be reconcil'd ; unless a Man may act according to the best Information he has, and not act but by the Approbation of his parochial Guide ; unless a Man, after an impartial Inquiry into the Grounds of Separation, may be determin'd by his own Reason (for that is your Sense in the place) and at the same time submit himself, and his Conscience to the Direction of another : In short, unless a Man may resolve to embrace Truth on which Side soever it appear to be, and yet resolve to embrace nothing for Truth but what a third Person, who our Adversaries, by the bye, say, is under strong Temptations to mislead 'em, does approve ; you must acknowledge, that your Dissenter is inconsistent with himself ; and that indeed, 'tis impossible he should be an honest Man, according to your own Notion of Honesty, tho' you should in great Goodness to him, allow him the

* Pref. Character of an * HONEST CHURCH-MAN.

AND now we are upon the Subject of Submission to spiritual Guides, you must bear with me while I shew you wherein, I think, you have mightily mistaken your Way. You cannot but know that this is a very tender Point, and ought to be handled with the utmost caution; not only because many of our own Friends, who otherwise are dispos'd to pay us the greatest Respect, are not yet sufficiently instructed in this Point; but because the Sectaries, and Papists will both make their Advantage of it: The Former will say, we are gone from the Principles of the first Reformers, and upon which the Reformation was grounded; the Latter will as readily pretend, that we did not leave them for the Truths of the Gospel, but for Power, and that while we are protesting against the Pope's Infallibility, we are setting up our own in its Place. For these Reasons we ought never to claim, so much as, indisputable Authority in express terms, but
should

should be as loud as our Neighbours in
 our Zeal for the Scripture; that it con-
 tains all things necessary for Salvation;
 that, in necessary Things, the Sense of it
 is plain to any Capacity, so it be read
 with due Attention, and an honest Dispo-
 sition; that 'tis a perfect Rule of Faith
 and Manners, and is to be read by all
 sorts of People: But then we may, upon
 proper Occasions, talk of Submission to
 the higher Powers, and the Authority of
 the Church, without determining what
 degrees of Submission or Authority we
 mean, or who the higher Powers and
 Church are; Or we may safely enough
 call ourselves the Embassadors of Christ,
who attend upon this very thing, to whom the
word of Reconciliation is committed, who in
Christ's stead pray: the people to be reconciled
to God, and, in the best manner we can,
 let our Hearers know, *that we watch for*
their Souls, and are Over them in the Lord.
 Now by keeping in Generals, and con-
 fining ourselves as near as we can to the
 Phrase of Scripture, we reap this double
 Advantage, Our honest Neighbours, who
 you

you know are more wrought upon by the Pomp of Expression than the Weight of Argument, are happily dispos'd to pay us the Reverence we dare not demand, and at the same time never so much as suspect that we are setting up an Authority over 'em, which is inconsistent with the Word of God.

BUT now, what have you done ! Indeed, Brother, your Zeal has transported you beyond all Reason ; you have deny'd the Sufficiency of Scripture, and set up another Rule for us to judge by in the concerns of our Souls : *The honest Dissenter*, you say, *has consulted those passages of Scripture, and those Testimonies of Antiquity, which are made use of to establish the necessity of the Episcopal Oder, (pag. 11.)* Now, if the Episcopal Order is necessary to a Church, and yet not to be prov'd without the Testimony of Antiquity ; how is the Scripture a perfect Rule of Faith and Manners, as we Protestants have always call'd it ? Besides, Would any Man in his Senses have talk'd at the rate you do ? That the People are bound to submit
their

their Consciences to our DIRECTION; that no. honest Man will determine his conduct without the APPROBATION of his parochial Minister, who you say, in the same place, is the DIRECTOR of his Soul and its concerns? Will not your Readers cry out *Popery* upon you? Nay, will they not say your Doctrine is worse than *Popery*, as much as ten Thousand infallible Guides are more insupportable, and implies a greater Absurdity than One?

You tell us, I confess, very roundly, That *the Minister of the parish is the Person whom the Laws of God and Man have set, and appointed to attend upon this very thing.* But you ought to have consider'd, that whatever Opinion you may have of your own Judgment, or however you may prescribe to your Parishioners, Our Adversaries are an Obstinate sort of People, and will be calling for Proofs in the case; you ought I say to have consider'd this, and not have rested a Point of such consequence on your bare Assertion. If divine and humane Laws are consider'd distinctly

Pag. 17.
2^d Edit.

stinctly in the Question, I'm afraid it
 must be granted, that since Parishes,
 Diocesess, Provinces and Kingdoms, are
 merely of humane Division, the Laws of
 God have nothing to do in the Question;
 if you say, That the Laws of God re-
 quire Obedience to those whom the Laws
 of Man have appointed (which I believe
 is your meaning) how shall we answer
 what is commonly urg'd by our Adver-
 saries, " That humane Authority is in all
 " Places the same, and consequently two
 " Persons, nay, the same Person in diffe-
 " rent Places, may be under different, in-
 " consistent Obligations about the same
 " Things? " In *England*, the Articles of
 our Church are the Standard of Truth; in
Scotland, their Confession of Faith, and in
Spain, the Decrees of the Council of *Trent* :
 On this side the *Tweed*, Episcopal Ordina-
 tion only is by divine Right ; On the o-
 ther side, 'tis an Usurpation on the rights
 of the *Presbyters* ; and in popish Countries,
 they are both schismatical Nullities.

THIS, they think, is sufficient to
 shew the Absurdity of resolving every
 thing

thing into humane Authority ; especially if one thinks, as you do, (*p. 10.*) *that true Principles are of no less Consequence to Men than that their Salvation depends upon 'em* ; because at that Rate, if Error be establish'd by Law (as you know all Churches but ours are in the wrong) a Man may be oblig'd to submit to Authority, and yet be damn'd for doing it : But your Scheme of Parochial Power, they say, carries it a great deal further, and truly for the present I can't help being of their Mind : For it not only establishes a Spiritual Kingdom in the Temporal, in which Case the former, since it regards our eternal Concerns, and since you know 'tis easy to persuade the People that all their Actions of what kind soever have a necessary tendency to advance or hinder their Salvation, will get the better of the Latter ; but sets up a Kingdom within a Kingdom, even in spiritual Matters. We must either drop the Notion of a National Establishment or parochial Scheme, or confess that this is so ; and that every Man is born under Two

Jurisdictions in the same spiritual Matters ; Two, that may be inconsistent, and always will be so, as often as the Parson of the Parish is not entirely in the Opinion of the Church express'd in the *Articles, Homilies, &c.* and other publick Determinations ; and that this is very often the Case, you that have heard our Ministers inveigh against the King's Supremacy, and ridicule the Calvinistical Doctrines, cannot be ignorant of.

BESIDES, if one Parish Priest is to be submitted to, because the Law has made him so ; it will follow, that every One must, for the same Reason : And then, what a Condition are People in upon the Death, or Removal of their Ministers ? They must believe, and practice one Thing to Day, another to Morrow, and a third, contrary to both next Week, if their Parsons should not entirely agree in their Sentiments of Things ; and can you be secure they will ? Nay, is it not almost impossible they should ? Unless they are as care-
less

less in spiritual Matters, as you would have their People be.

T H E R E is another Consequence to be drawn from this Doctrine, which we of all Men living ought particularly to guard against, and which you, if you had known the Constitution of our Church, would have been aware of; namely, That Episcopal Jurisdiction, as our Church understands it, is entirely destroy'd by it. The Bishop, you know, in the Sense of our Church, is the Pastor of his Diocese, and the Parish Priests only his Curates; and therefore in the Prayer for the Clergy, she makes no other Distinction, than that of Bishops, and Curates; *Send down upon our Bishops and Curates, and all Congregations committed to their Charge, &c.* But if, as you would have it, the Parson is the Guide, and Director of the Souls, and the Pastor of his People, he cannot, in the Exercise of that Power, be subject so much as to his Diocesan; since if he was, the People would not be so properly under his Direction, as under that of the Bishop, from

whom the Parson receives his Power and Instructions.

UPON the Whole, I think, this Notion of yours has all the Mischiefs of *Po-pery* in it, with ten times its Absurdity. So that I must desire you to read and consider this Part of your Performance once more, and continue it in your next Edition, if you can.

AND, as you have betray'd your Cause, by making your Characters inconsistent with one another, as well as with your own Account of common Honesty: So have you given our Adversaries a great deal of Reason to triumph, by multiplying Words to no manner of Purpose. I would suppose, That in your *Marks of an honest Dissenter*, you had your Eye on such Qualities as are peculiar to him as a Dissenter; and do either extenuate the Guilt of his Separation, or at least dispose him to renounce it: Otherwise, whatever is said of him, may be apply'd to any other honest Man, and consequently, cannot be his Character, considered as a Dissenter: So that to say, *He*
desires

desires to maintain the Unity of the Church ; 1. Mark.
That he examines Things soberly, and impar- 2^d Inst.
ally ; That he does not with-hold what is legally 5th Inst.
due to his parochial Minister ; That he allows
himself in the habitual Practice of no Sin, and 11. Mark.
is in Charity with all Men : Is in all Respects 12. Mark.
 as impertinent, as to say, That an honest
 Clergyman does not Swear to the Go-
 vernment, with an Intent to subvert it ;
 or teach Doctrines for the Truths of God,
 which he does not believe ; since these
 are Things in which all honest Men agree.
 But to be a little more particular.

As to your first, and what you call the
 main Part of the Character, you can-
 not but know, that the Dissenters pretend
 at least, to endeavour after the Unity of
 the Church as much as we do, and that
 the Question between us, is not, Whether
 Unity ought to be preserv'd ; but where-
 in it does consist ? Which, they say, is in
 maintaining the Essentials of Christianity,
 and in preserving mutual Love, and a Ca-
 tholick Communion one among another ;
 and that otherwise, our Church is not in
 Unity with any Christian Society, or
 even

even with itself : For if we place it in an Agreement of Opinion, or Uniformity of Worship, or Government ; The first, say they, never was, or will be, on this side of Heaven ; the two latter, we have not in our own Church, Cathedral and Parochial Worship, differing from one another as widely as their Way does from ours : And Tho' the greater Number of the Churches of *England*, are subject to Episcopal Jurisdiction ; yet a great Number of 'em are entirely exempted from it. So that, whatever you say on that Head, does not in the least affect them, unless you had shewn what is the Unity you plead for : Which, I think you have not done.

As for your second and third *Marks*, the Dissenters are willing to join Issue with us upon the Obligation we are all under to follow the Dictates of our Consciences ; which, they say, is founded on this plain Rule, That *we are to worship God in Sincerity, and Truth*. But you, I find, cannot trust your Cause on that Issue ; and therefore destroy it in your fourth *Mark*, as I have already shewn.

INDEED,

INDEED, I could not but be under some Pain for you, doubting how you would secure your Retreat here: For if it be the Duty of Dissenters to examine for themselves, I did not know but it might be equally a Duty on us of the Establishment, especially *when it is the Mark of common Honesty, to act according to the best Information we have.* You know some of the best of our Writers have justify'd our Separation from the Church of Rome on that Ground, and no other: Mr. Chillingworth Archbishop Tillotson, and, indeed, most of our Divines, who have engag'd in the popish Controversy, have turn'd their Strength this Way: But you, Sir, have found out a new Way to vindicate the Church, and have very luckily eas'd her Members of the Fatigue of Thinking, which you have thrown on the Sectaries for their Disobedience: You say, *They who* Pref.
oppose that which is establish'd, are certainly oblig'd to have solid Grounds, and substantial Reasons for such their Opposition; whereas they, who in Conformity to the Establishment, and in Obedience to their Governors, continue in the
Pag. 7.
Church,

Pag. 8.

Church, are not equally bound to defend and maintain every Point of their Communion ; for the Churchmen if they are mistaken, do but a good Thing, i. e. Obey for want of sufficient Information ; whereas, the Dissenters if they err, do an ill Thing, i. e. Disobey, for want of

Pag. 13. 2^d
Edit.

rightly informing themselves : Nay, tho' they should be in the right, there is not the least Shadow of Excuse for 'em, because they are so, thro' a blind, and ignorant Prejudice. So that notwithstanding, the honest Man endeavours to square all his Actions

Pag. 2.

according to the best Information he hath, or can have, from Reason or Revelation ; notwithstanding true Principles are, you say, necessary to Salvation ; notwithstanding we are to render God a reasonable Service, and in St. Paul's Words, which you very awkwardly pervert, To prove all Things, and hold fast that which is good, and to render an Account of our Faith ; you believe, that Obedience, is better than Sincerity, or a right Belief ; and that the God of Truth will accept the Sacrifice of Fools ; as our Adversaries say, all Worship He has not warranted is, if it be done in pro-

Pag. 8.

found

found Respect to our Fellow-Creatures.

You tell us, indeed, That *Governors* Pag. 7.
being to be obey'd in all Things lawful, 'tis
sufficient for those who obey, to be persuaded
that the Things are lawful in which they do so :
 But then, how is that consistent with o-
 beying for want of sufficient Information,
 which you say, is a good Thing? Is there
 no Difference between being persuaded
 of the Lawfulness of a Thing, and the not
 being rightly inform'd of its Unlawful-
 ness? Besides, if the Churchman was ju-
 stified only upon his Persuasion of the
 Lawfulness of the Terms of Conformity,
 what Difference is there between him and
 the Dissenter, as to the Duty of Exami-
 nation? Can a Man be persuaded of the
 Lawfulness of any Course, without exa-
 mining what can be said for, and against
 it? So that you must confess, Either that
 you have made a Distinction, where there
 is no real Difference, or else that Dis-
 senters only are bound to *worship God in*
Spirit and in Truth ; but that a blind Obe-
 dience to an humane Institution, will serve
 the Churchman's Turn as well : Which I

D

believe

believe is a Secret unknown to the Ancients, and reserv'd for your Discovery, who have so happily pleaded for Conviction against Evidence. I would not wrong you, and therefore I'll repeat your

Pag. 14. 2^d
Edit.

Words; *He (that is the honest Dissenter) will not have the worse Opinion of any Thing, because it is not what he has been taught, BELIEVES, or practises; but will have that profound Veneration for Truth, which it deserves, i. e. give it leave to convince him.*

Now, tho' an honest Man has not the worse Opinion of the Person of another, because he does not believe as he does; he must, whether he will or no, have this ill Opinion of a Proposition which he does not believe, *viz.* That 'tis false; nor can he, however you may find yourself dispos'd to it, give any ~~such~~ Leave to convince him, till he believes it is so.

Truth

THE Case you put of Obedience to Princes, tho' perhaps one cannot prove their Title to ~~any~~ ^{every} Part of their Dominions, I own, did surprize me; for, besides that it is nothing to the Purpose, Obedience to them being due only on Account

count of Protection, and for the Security of our Civil Interests; which Ends, if they are gain'd as well under an Usurper, as the lawful Prince, we are to look no farther. Whereas religious Worship is a Thing of a quite different Nature, and regards our future State: So that in the first Case, we are to study only the Peace of the Society to which we belong; in the latter, we are strictly to conform ourselves to the Will of God, be the temporal Consequence what it will: I say, besides all this, you could not have fall'n on a more unlucky Topick than this of the Rights of Princes: Time was, when we were allow'd to state the Difference between *de Jure*, and *de Facto* Kings; and to make the Acts of the latter, (whom we always suppos'd to be mere Parliamentary ones) valid, or invalid, absolutely or to special Purpose, as we thought fit: But these Times will not bear such Inquiries, we must *swear and pray*, whether we will or no: Therefore let me beg it of you, as you regard the Quiet of some of the honest Churchmen in your Neighbourhood, say no more of that Matter. I SHALL

I SHALL take a little Notice of another *Mark* of an honest Dissenter ; in which, I said before, all honest Men agree with him, because it will naturally bring me to some others that have not been touch'd
 12. *Mark.* upon ; which is, that *He is entirely and perfectly in Charity with all other Christians, And therefore however they differ from him, he is willing to believe they do so upon Principles of the same Honesty with himself.*

THE Sectaries, I believe, will not quarrel with you for making Charity one Part of the Character of an honest Man ; because they say, 'tis the very Characteristick of Christianity ; 'tis the Disposition by which the Followers of the meek and humble Jesus, are distinguish'd from the World ; *By this, shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if you love one another.* But how is this Christian Charity to be express'd ? You say, by putting the best Construction, in doubtful Cases, upon the Words and Actions of another which they will bear. But is this all ? Does it consist only in Thinking well, or upon Occasion speaking handsomely of those

those who differ from us? If so; an honest Heathen may have as good Pretensions to this Christian Vertue, as the best Man among us. Besides, to what Purpose should a Man say kind Things of those that differ from him, if he is bound to declare by the whole Tenour of his Actions, that he looks upon them as no better than *Heathens* or *Publicans*? And yet the honest Dissenter, you say, *renounces Communion with all that differ from him, tho' the Difference lies only in speculative Opinions, and has a mean Opinion of those of the Church that even occasionally worship God with him.* This is the Substance of the sixth, seventh, and eighth *Marks*. You know, Sir, that the Sacrament of the *Lord's-Supper* was instituted for a perpetual Memorial of the Love of Christ to us, and as a Badge of ours to one another; Shall we then pretend to mutual Charity, and yet drive any from our Assemblies, whom, you confess, we are oblig'd to account honest Men; and, tho' mistaken in some Points, good Christians? Did not the Judaizing, and other Christians, differ in some

6, 7, 8.
Mark.

some Matters which were of as great, or greater Consequence, than those between us and the Dissenters? But did they not at the same time communicate together? Had not *Peter* and *Paul* their Differences? yet we may be sure they worshiped God in the same Place; nay, did not *Paul* himself, tho' he oppos'd those that asserted the absolute Necessity of the Jewish Ceremonies, I say, did not he use 'em among the *Jews*, and *become all Things to all Men*? And, indeed, I don't know how the Catholick Church can with any Propriety be call'd the Body of Christ, if the several Members of it are to have no spiritual Commerce with one another.

BUT, you say, *The Presbyterians and Anabaptists should not worship God together.* Why not? Because they differ in a Point which has no manner of Relation to ordinary Worship? *But a Dissenter should never worship with the Church:* That is, he should hate us as heartily, as we do him. *At least, then, you say, he should do it always.* No; for then, he says, he must renounce the Society of all other Christians; which

which, he thinks, he can't do without the Guilt of Uncharitableness, *i. e.* of *Schism*. You say, indeed, *If it be once lawful, 'tis always a Duty*. Really, Brother, I do not see that Consequence; I know it has been often urg'd in this Manner; for which Reason I am the less surpriz'd to see it in your Paper. Our Divines have of late, generally glory'd in this, as an impregnable Argument; but surely, that must have been from their mistaking the Question between us and the Dissenters; which, as I take it, does not go upon the Lawfulness or Unlawfulness of the Terms of Communion, so much, as upon the Right of imposing such Terms as are not warranted by the Word of God. They say, Christ Jesus is King, and sole Lawgiver of his Church, or to use your own Words (p. 28.) *That He is the supreme King, Priest, and Prophet, of that Society which is call'd his Church*, and consequently; that 'tis his Right alone to determine the necessary Qualifications of all his Subjects; that He has made over the Benefits of the Gospel to his Followers upon certain Terms set down

down in Scripture: And that therefore the appointing any Modes of Worship which are not to be found there, and excluding all Christians, who will not comply with 'em, from our Assemblies, is, they say, not only the highest Inroad on the Prerogative of Christ; but also very injurious to our Fellow-Christians: From whence they conclude, That as they regard the Honour of their Lord and Master, or the Interests of His Church, they ought to bear their publick Testimony against this Usurpation; which, they think, they cannot do so well as by their present Dissent. And if this be the Case, you would do well to consider, whether there is not a great Difference between Total and Occasional Conformity: By the first, a Man submits to the Right of Imposing, and, as far as he can, declares his Approbation of it: By the second, he shews his Dislike of it, in Worshipping God generally and statedly with the Dissenters, tho' at the same time he testifies his Charity for those, who he is willing to believe are sincere, tho' mistaken Christians, by Worshipping

Shipping with the Church upon Occasion.

BUT If the Truth of the Case, which I confess, is not always the strongest Motive, could not prevail with you in this Matter, One would think common Discretion, and the Zeal you have for the the Church, should have taught you not to condemn a Practice which has done our Cause good Service, and which our Fathers had a particular Dependance upon at the Reformation. The Sectaries, you know, are bred up under strong Prejudices against the Church; which tho' they are unreasonable, yet while they possess their Minds, are in the Nature of first Principles to them; And how shall those Prejudices be remov'd? By keeping at the utmost Distance from our Assemblies? By constantly frequenting their own, where they are not likely to hear any Thing to our Advantage? Or by coming among us to be better inform'd? And if they should, can we think they will be converted in an Instant? No; Education, Example,

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and in some Cases, perhaps Interest oppose the Work, which according to your Maxim, of ~~now~~ ^{once} *lawful, and always a Duty*; must be done in a Moment, or never done: How many, who have begun with *Occasional Conformity*, have in process of Time, become *Total Conformists*? Nay, I believe, I may say, that we have not an honest Man, who has come over from their Quarters to ours, but did come to us by these Degrees which you condemn.

BUT, God be thank'd, our Reformers were not of your Mind; they compil'd our excellent *Liturgy* with a particular Regard to the Prejudices of the *Roman-Catholicks*; and, with a View that they would come to us by Degrees, retain'd many of the popish Rites; as the Surplice, Cross in Baptism, Kneeling at the Sacrament, &c. Not but that those Things they thought should be laid aside, when the Times would bear such an Alteration, but purely to win over the *Papists* by these Compliances: For the same Reason the Petition in the *Litany*, *From the Tyranny of*
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Their letter to the foreign Reformers. *Hist. Ref.* Vol. III.

the Bishop of Rome, Good Lord, deliver us ; was dropt ; and the explicite Declaration against *Transubstantiation*, which was in K. Edw. VI's *Articles*, was omitted in the Declaration of certain *Articles* of Religion, fet out in the Beginning of Queen Elizabeth's Reign, and the Matter left in general Words in those, pass'd in the 13th Year of her Reign, which we now use.

AND because the Account of that Affair may give you a pretty good Notion of the Temper of that Age, and of the Counsels that govern'd at the *Reformation*, you will give me Leave to be a little more particular : *There is in King Edward VI's Articles (Art. 29.) a large Refutation of the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, from the Impossibility of a Body's being in two Places at one Time, and the Testimony of the Scripture, that Christ was taken up into Heaven, there to abide to the End of the World ; the same Refutation in Substance is in the original Copy of Queen Elizabeth's Articles, subscrib'd by all those that sate in either House of Convocation at that Time,*

BUT DASH'D OVER WITH MINIUM ; yet

so, that it is still legible; the Secret of it was this: The Queen and her Council study'd to unite all into the Communion of the Church; and it was alledg'd, that such an express Declaration against the real Presence, might drive from the Church many who were of that Persuasion; and therefore it was thought to be enough to condemn Transubstantiation, and to say, that Christ was present, after a spiritual Manner, and received by Faith. Thus you see, our Reformers thought the People might come to Church, and yet retain their former popish Opinions; that they might receive the Sacrament with us, and yet believe it to be the Sacrifice of the Mass; and that our Church was content to have their Bodies in our publick Assemblies, tho' their Hearts were elsewhere, and yet you complain of Something much less than this, in the Occasional Conformity of Dissenters: But with what Justice or Prudence, you may see by what I have said, especially if you consider further, that the Pope was the first Man that ever condemn'd it: He saw his Interest by that Means declining every Day in this Kingdom, and

Proceed-
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the Occa-
sional Bill.

and therefore, THO' HE TWICE OFFER'D
 TO CONFIRM OUR SERVICE-BOOK, he at
 last forbade his spiritual Subjects ever to come
 to Church, as the only Means to retrieve his
 Affairs here. Nay, some of the best of
 our Writers, as well as of our Adversar-
 ies, have been of the same Mind; Bi-
 shop Taylor declares plainly for Occasional
 Conformity, in his *Liberty of Prophecyng*;
 so does *Stillingfleet* in his *Irenicum*; and
 tho' he afterwards contradicted a great
 Part of that Book; yet the Duty of Occa-
 sional Conformity, and the Advantage
 the Church would reap by it, was so plain
 to him, that in his *Mischief of Separation*,
 he presses the Dissenters to it in the
 strongest Terms imaginable: Not would
 the Dissenters (as their Writers pretend)
 be ever brought to it, (so plainly is it
 against their Interest) if the Love of
 Truth was not stronger with 'em than
 the Desire of forming a Party. And shall
 Protestants run into a Notion which the
 Pope advanc'd to secure his own Power a-
 mong us, and which of Necessity must per-
 petuate our Differences? Shall Church-
 men

Hist. Ref.
Vol. II.
fol. 417.

Dr. Cas-
lamy's
Rights of
the Prote-
stant Dis-
senters.

men, good Churchmen, as you are, condemn a Practice, which the Dissenters, if they had seen their own Interest, and were resolv'd to pursue it as a Party, would have condemn'd long ago? Shall we say, *the honest Dissenter* does not allow himself in a Practice, which is so likely to make 'em all *honest Churchmen*? Or, can you call upon 'em to act by the best Information they can get, and yet deny 'em the best Means of Information we can give 'em, which are our excellent Sermons? So that here you have betray'd your own Scheme, unless you will have us think, that the Way to be reconcil'd to the Church, is never to come near it; and, that those are likely to have the greatest Value for us, who know least of us.

I SHALL say little of your tenth *Mark*, because, I believe, when you are rightly appriz'd of the Difference between us and the Dissenters, you will be asham'd of it
 Mark. 10. yourself. *The honest Dissenter*, you say, *does not infuse his Scruples into other People.* But if he thinks, as you do, *That Christ is*
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the King, Priest, and Prophet of that Society Pag. 28.
2^d Edit.
which is called his Church, and that unscriptural Terms of Communion, are Usurpations on his Prerogative, and as you (pag. 29.) say, *That all who join with an Usurper are in some Measure guilty of his Usurpation, tho' not to so great a Degree, as the Usurper himself is ;* I say, if he thinks thus, he will think himself bound by the Allegiance he owes his Lord and Master, as well as by the Regard which is due to his Brethren, to excite the same Spirit of Jealousy in others ; and if he thinks it his Duty to keep up publick Worship, he is willing that those who officiate as Ministers in the Congregation, should be qualify'd for that Work ; which we all allow cannot so well be without a preparatory Education for it, and therefore sets up, or encourages Schools or Academies for that Purpose : Which you call *Training* Pag. 32.
2^d Edit.
them up in a Method, an Art, (or as I find you had rather express yourself) *a Knack of Praying Extempore ;* and are mightily concern'd, *that the poor People should after all imagine, that the HOLY Man utters these*

divine,

divine, these ravishing Prayers, by the immediate, extraordinary Assistance of the Holy Ghost.

REALLY, Brother, this Smartness, is below the Dignity of our Order, as well as profane in the present Case; the Business of Prayer, and the Share the Holy Ghost has in it, and in other religious Duties, are by no Means the proper Subjects of Ridicule: The Dissenters are in the right in begging the Assistance of the Spirit in their religious Performances, we do the same in our *Liturgy*; and therefore, however mistaken they are about the Manner of the Assistance, in common Decency, you should not have mention'd the *German Artist*, or have set the *Holy Man*, as you scoffingly call him, in so ridiculous a Light. I would not have you mistake me, I don't blame you now for being witty, (tho' that is not to be born in serious Matters) but for attempting to be so: Therefore let me, as a Friend, leave two Cautions with you; Never jest in sacred Things: And whenever you are again tempted to shew your Wit,

Wit, consider, that Nothing is so, that is not good Sense ; least while Fools laugh at your Jest, wise Men turn it upon you :

— *He Nuge seria ducunt* —

In Mala —

I SHALL conclude my Letter with an Observation or two on your ninth Mark, which is, *That the Dissenter, till he* Mark 9. *is THOROUGHLY PERSUADED that one of the Congregations separating from the Church has a Minister duly authoriz'd to officiate in holy Things, will not join with any of 'em ; but will absent himself from 'em all.* In the Illustration of this Mark, you make a divine Commission necessary to a legal Ministry ; and conclude, *That those who join with One not so commission'd, are in some Measure guilty of the same Usurpation, tho' not in so great a Degree as he who acts in those Cases without a Commission.* Now, will not this Conclusion of yours, extend to all Sorts of People, who are not THOROUGHLY PERSUADED of their Minister's Commission ? And if so ; pray consider,

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what will be the Consequence of your Rule ; You don't, it seems, *undertake to determine the Validity of the Commission of any of the Ministry.* This, you say, *is not your Business.* I will suppose then, (for Argument Sake, you will give me leave to suppose it) that you cannot prove the Lawfulness of any one Ministry. Your own Consequence then is, That you must absent yourself from all publick Worship. But if it should be own'd, that you can prove this Point to your own Satisfaction ; yet surely, the Bulk of the People know Nothing of the Matter ; they have not bent their Studies that Way ; nor have they Leisure or Capacity for such Enquiries ; nor is it possible they should. If they must consult those Passages of Antiquity that are made use of to establish the Necessity of the Episcopal Order, and to prove their Succession, as you (*pag. 11.*) say *Dissenters ought to do.* And must they never come to Church till they are *thoroughly persuaded* of the Legality of your Commission?

BESIDES,

BESIDES, you know, the Efficacy of the Sacraments, does not depend on the Intention of the Minister; and does it depend, think you, on somewhat which neither Minister nor People know any thing of, and is entirely out of their Power? Do you think Jesus Christ gave Himself a Sacrifice for us, and died to purchase to Himself a People, and that He has left his Followers at such an Uncertainty for their Salvation, as your Doctrine would introduce? That He has left a Law with his People to be supply'd from Passages of Antiquity?

WE have been taught, I know, to assert the Necessity of Episcopal Ordination, in a Succession from the Apostles; but if that is to be done at all, it should be done with Caution, even in our Sermons, but never in Print, because that Succession must be deriv'd thro' the Romish Church, which has been divided into great Schisms, and at last was so corrupted, so chang'd from the Model of Christ and his Apostles, that we were forc'd to separate from her: And when

we did so; how was the Succession preserv'd! — Perhaps, you have not read this Part of our History, and therefore I'll set down a Passage or two from Bishop Burnet's *History of the Reformation*, with my own Observations, which you may peruse at your Leisure.

Vol. II. THERE were but few Bishops living
378. at the Opening of Queen Elizabeth's first Parliament, in which the *Oath of Supremacy* was appointed to be taken by all
1. Eliz. c. Bishops, and other Ecclesiastical Persons, under
1. Pain of Forfeiture of Offices, and Disability for Life; and when the Parliament was over, the *Oath* was tender'd to the Bishops, who all of 'em, except Landaff, refus'd it, and incurr'd the Penalty of the Law. The See of Canterbury, indeed (as were also some other Sees) was vacant at the Queen's Accession, by the Death of Card^d. Pool; and Parker, a private Clergyman, was design'd for it; but not put in till after this Forfeiture by the Rest of the Bishops: On the eighth
Fol. 396. of July the *Conge d' estire* was sent to Canterbury, on the first of August he was cho-

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sen; on the ninth of *September* following a Warrant was directed to the Bishops of *Durham, Bath and Wells, Peterborough, Landaff, and Barlow and Scory* (styl'd only Bishops, not being elected to any Sees) for his Consecration. You see, it was then thought necessary to direct the Commission to *three of those very Bishops*, viz. *Durham, Peterborough, Bath and Wells*, who had refus'd the *Oath of Supremacy*, and were not yet turn'd out of their Sees: But these Men, perhaps imagining that they should be made use of to fill some Vacancy, and then be laid aside themselves, refus'd to act under it: And therefore, on the ninth of *December*, a new Warrant pass'd the Seal to the Bishop of *Landaff, Barlow*, Bishop elect of *Chichester*, Fol. 403. *Scory*, elect of *Hereford*, *Coverdale*, late Bishop of *Exeter*, *Hodgkins*, Suffragan of *Bedford*, *John*, Suffragan of *Thetford*, and *Bele*, Bishop of *Ossory*, That they, or any Four of them, should consecrate him: By Virtue of this Commission, he was consecrated at *Lambeth* by *Barlow, Scory*, Fol. 403. *Coverdale* and *Hodgkins*, on the sevententh
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of the same Month: *Parker* being thus
 Fol. 403. consecrated, did *immediately consecrate Bishops* for other Sees then vacant, to the Number of Fourteen; and the rest were in a short Time fill'd up. So that the Legality of all the succeeding Consecrations depended entirely on *Parker's*; for which you may observe, that *Landaff* and *Ossory*, who, according to the Historian, were the only old Bishops, with Sees, named in the Commission, had no manner of Share in it: *Barlow* and *Scory* were not, says the History, so much as Bishops elect at the Time the first Warrant pass'd; and at the Time of the second, and when they assisted at the Consecration, were indeed elected to Sees, *but not put in till afterwards*: *Coverdale*, who is call'd late Bishop of *Exeter*, had no See at that Time, *Exeter* being full at the Queen's Accession, and becoming vacant by *Turbeville's* refusing the Oath of Supremacy; nor was *Coverdale* even then consider'd as *de Jure* Bishop, and wrongfully depriv'd in the popish Reign; for among the first Consecrations that *Parker* made, we find,
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he consecrated one Alley, Bishop of Exeter ; nor do I find, that he was ever look'd upon as a Bishop in any other Instance during that Reign : The last, who assisted at it, was *Hodgkins*, Suffragan of *Bedford*, who, as the Case then stood, I'm afraid, con'd have no Power to do it ; for the Statute provides, That no Suffragan Bishop shall exercise any episcopal Jurisdiction, but by Commission from the Archbishop, or Bishop of the Diocese ; And, That if any One does exercise any Episcopal Power otherwise, or for longer Time, than is limited in such Commission, he shall incur the Penalty of a Premunire. ^{26. H. 8.} ^{14.}

Now, if the Suffragan acts only under a Commission from his Diocesan, the Bishop of *Lincoln*, in whose Diocese *Bedford* is, being remov'd, and *Canterbury* dead, his Commission must determine of Course ; for every Deputy (and such the Suffragan was) as to those Matters to which his Deputation extends, stands in the Place of his Principal, and acts only in his Stead ; so that if the Principal should die, or be remov'd, the Deputation falls of itself.

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HAVING quoted Bishop *Burnet* pretty largely in this Case, you may expect I should set down his Opinion of it; but truly, his Lordship seems to give up the Point, and rather excuses it from the Confusion the Church was then in, than offers at a plain Vindication. However, upon the Whole, 'tis plain, our Reformers were under some Difficulties in this Affair of the Consecration; otherwise, the first Commission would not have been directed to three Bishops, who had forfeited their Sees by an Act of Parliament pass'd that very Year; or the second, to one *quondam* Bishop, (whom they never restor'd) two Bishops elect, and two Suffragans; especially, if we further observe, That in the *Letters Patents* for the Consecration of the first Bishops, the Queen, for avoiding all Ambiguity, and Questions, that might be objected against the same; hath, by her supreme Power and Authority, dispensed with all Causes and doubt of any IMPERFECTION or DISABILITY, that can, or may, be objected to it. This, as the Statute says, was a Caution which had not been us'd in Letters Patents of

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the same Nature ; and therefore may give one Reason to suspect, that the Legality of the Proceeding was not so clear, as One could wish it ; and this Suspicion, is confirm'd by the Act of Parliament which pass'd in the eighth Year of her Reign, Declaring all the Consecrations that had been ^{8 Eliz. c.} *made since the Queen's Accession, Valid ; any* ^{1.} *Matter or Thing, that can, or may be objected to the contrary, notwithstanding ; and as it is afterwards express'd, any Statute, Law, Canon, or other Thing, to the contrary notwithstanding ; Provided, that no Person shall be molested by Means of any Certificate of any Archbishop, or Bishop already made, or before the End of this Session of Parliament to be made, touching his Refusal of the Oath of Supremacy ; and that, all Tenders of the Oath already made, or to be made, before the End of this Session of Parliament, by any Archbishop or Bishop ; and all Refusal of the Oath, so by them tender'd, shall be Void, and of no Effect in Law. This Proviso refers to the Statute of the 5th of Q. Eliz. cap. 1. By which, all* ^{5 Eliz. c.} *Archbishops, and Bishops, are impower'd* ^{1.} *to tender the Oath of Supremacy to all spiri-*
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tual Persons, and requir'd to certify their Refusal into the *King's-Bench*, upon which Certificate the Party was to be indicted: So that the Parliament, tho' they confirm'd the Bishops in their Sees; yet not confirming; but on the contrary, excepting, and vacating those Acts of theirs which regarded the Liberty or Property of a third Person, have virtually declar'd, that they did not look upon 'em as good Bishops before this Act pass'd; for if they had been so, these Tenders of the *Oath* which they made as Bishops, and under the Sanction of an Act of Parliament, would have been valid.

BESIDES, if we put our Cause on the Foot of a divine Commission, will not the Sectaries retort upon us, That either the popish Bishops had a divine Commission, or they had none: If they had, how could they be depriv'd of it, even by an Act of Parliament, and consequently, what Right had those who succeeded 'em? If they had not, how came we by it, who Claim under their Consecrations? So that I think, instead of insisting loudly on our
divine

divine Right, as you and other indiscreet Men have done ; we had better let that Matter pass over in silence, (unless now and then we introduce it in the Pulpit), and rest upon our national, legal Establishment, which will serve our Turn as well. I have, I confess, some Hopes that we shall hear no more of it from you, because you introduce this Part of your Character with a seeming Diffidence, which truly is very becoming Writers of your Form: You might very well expect, as you say you do, *That it would appear harsh and surprizing, not only to Ring-leaders of Sects and Factions ; but to some tolerable well-meaning Men amongst us.* I will only add, That I hope it does by this Time appear so to you. p. 26.

You may be apt to ask, Why I, who am a Stranger to your Person, have given you this Trouble ; at least, why not before now ? I'll give you my Answer, and then take my leave of you for this Time. I hoped, one or another of our Brethren in your Neighbourhood would have undertaken this Work. I thought it properly

ly lay upon them to animadvert on a Book, which came out among 'em, and which does Dishonour to our Church; at least, that their Friendship for you, might have prevail'd with them to Point out your Mistakes; but finding by their Silence, that they Consult their own Ease more than the Church's Honour, or the setting you right, I could not forbear letting them and you know, that I think weak Arguments betray the Cause they are brought to support, and that our Church has suffer'd (and unless more Care be taken in the Choice of our Champions, is likely to suffer) more by the Folly of its Friends, than by the Malice of its Enemies —

I am, dear Brother,

Yours (while you are the Church's)

Friend and humble Servant,

Sept. 15.
1716.

ERRATA.

Pag. 5. l. 20. for *Wash* read *Mask* p. 7. l. 21. for *ever* r. *even* p. 10. l. 12. for *Supposition* r. *Suspicion* p. 13. l. 17. for *Pray* r. *Pray* p. 26. l. 19. for *such* r. *Truth* ibid. l. 23. for *any* r. *every* p. 34. l. 3. for *ever* r. *once* p. 37. in Margin, for *Calamy's Right* r. *Dr. Calamy And the Rights*, &c. p. 46. l. 23. for *ever* r. *even*

